

# MARTIN AND THE BAD GIANT

(A continuation of the story, "The Fairy's Gift")

By Antonio C. Muñoz



WHEN MARTIN reached his home, he gave the sack of berries to his mother. Early the next morning, Martin and his mother went to the town to sell the berries. During the days that followed, Martin did all he could to help his parents. Every morning he took his father's provisions to the place where the latter was working. On Mondays he carried the soiled clothes to the river for his mother. In the afternoon he was there again to bring back the washed clothes. When his parents did not need him, he always went to the woods to gather wild berries or to cut wood for fuel. He did not see his Fairy Godmother any more but he knew that the kind lady was with him wherever he went. Although the presence of the magic needle in his pocket made him feel quite safe, he never forgot the fairy's last words, "YOUR FINE CHARACTER IS YOUR MOST POWERFUL PROTECTION." Martin, therefore, did his best to be good always.

In the middle of the dense forest, lived a bad giant. Often at midnight, this wicked giant would go to town and rob the people of whatever money they had. Once a week, he would carry away a child. The people believed that those poor children were eaten by the giant, for not one of them ever returned. The people did not know what to do. They were afraid of the giant. They fled in terror whenever they saw him coming.

Martin did not know anything about the wicked deeds of the giant. One day, as he was selling berries in the town, he happened to hear a group of three frightened people talking about the bad giant and his weekly visit that night.

"This means another, lost child!" sighed one.

"And some more bags of money," added another.

"Whose child will it be?" asked the third man.

"Nobody can tell," was the first speaker's answer.

Martin had heard enough. He knew what was going to happen that night. He picked up his empty basket and went home. It was getting dark for the sun had set.

"YOUR FINE CHARACTER IS YOUR MOST POWERFUL PROTECTION. THRUST THE NEEDLE INTO THE BODY OF ANYONE WHO WISHES TO DO YOU HARM, AND NO MATTER HOW STRONG OR BRAVE HE IS, HE WILL BE AT YOUR MERCY." These last words of the fairy rang in his ears as he sat in his little room. They seemed to urge him to go and save the town from further harm. It was about eleven o'clock. The whole house was still. His father and mother were asleep. Slowly he walked on tiptoe toward the door to the street. As fast as his legs could carry him, he walked toward the town. When he reached the marketplace, the church clock struck twelve. His heart beat fast as he saw a huge figure coming. It was the bad giant. As soon as the giant was near, Martin stood up and pretended to run. He wanted the giant to catch him. The giant easily caught him. With two bags of money in his left hand and Martin in his right, the giant walked straight toward the forest. Soon they reached his home.

The giant's house was made of logs. It was big enough to accommodate a hundred carabaos. The interior was lighted with torches. A stove made of limestone occupied one of the corners. In another corner, the giant had his bed which was made of logs. A buri mat was spread on a thick layer

of dry leaves which served as mattress. A big table stood in the center of the one-room building. It was the giant's dining table. Under it, Martin saw a heap of bones. They looked like the bones he saw in the cemetery when he went there with his mother on All-Souls' Day.

The giant placed the two money bags on a shelf. He told Martin to sit on a stool.

"Don't move," he warned the boy, "for if you do, I'll crush you to death."



"Look!" the giant continued as he pointed to the heap of human bones under the table. "If you don't behave well, your bones will be there, too, before morning."

Martin shivered although he had the magic needle in his pocket. Suppose the needle would not work and suppose the good fairy had stopped protecting him. He knew that the giant would eat him. In his mind, he had a picture of the giant feasting over his roasted body and dropping his bones on the big heap under the table.

The giant went out of the house. He returned with an armful of firewood which he threw into the fire. Then he got a pointed iron bar and sat down opposite Martin.

"Come here, little boy, for I'll tell you a bedtime story before we go to bed," he said pretending to be kind.

Martin stood up and went to the giant. The needle was in his hand.

"S—s—i—rrr," he stammered, "I know now how powerful you are. The world should make you a king for nobody else is stronger than you. Nobody else is wiser or wealthier than you. Before you tell me that bedtime story, please allow me to kiss your foot to show my respect and admiration."

The giant placed the two money bags on a shelf. "You may."

Martin knelt down and held the giant's foot as if to kiss it. Then he drove the needle into the soft part. The giant shuddered. A look of revenge was in his face but that was all he could do. He had lost control of himself. The needle had done its work well. Then the giant was still. His face was calm. His body was alive but Martin knew that his bad character had left him. It was a fight between the good and the bad and the good came out victorious.

Martin stood up and looked at the giant again. A change had come over the latter's face. It was no longer cruel. There was kindness and humility in it, instead.

The giant also stood up. He stroked Martin's head. Then he got a sack and put in it all the bones under the table. He got all the small bags of money and put them in another sack. He tied one of the sacks to the end of a pole and the other sack to the other end of the same pole. After that, he held Martin's hand and the two went out into the dark. Soon they reached the cemetery. The giant poured out the bones at the foot of a cross which stood in the center of that home of the dead. Martin heard him sobbing. They left the place and went to the town.

The giant placed the money bags on the doorsteps of different houses. He was returning them to the owners. When the last bag was returned, he pressed Martin's hand and said, "Thank you."

The giant walked toward the forest. It was dawn. The eastern sky was beginning to brighten. Martin ran home. His father and mother were still sleeping when he came. He went directly to his little room and lay down. The sun was high in the sky when he woke up. He ate his breakfast and then helped his parents as usual.